

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

BRIAN SCHWEITZER
GOVERNOR



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Chairman Kevin Martin
Federal Communications Commission
Room 8-B201
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

AUG - 1 2007

Federal Communications Commission
Office of the Secretary

WC Docket No. 05-337
CC Docket No. 96-45

Dear Chairman Martin:

I am writing to bring to your attention a major proposal being considered by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) that could have a negative impact on rural wireless consumers in our state. As I understand it, the FCC is moving quickly on a proposal to cap a specific fund within the Universal Service Fund (USF), which would freeze support to providers seeking to build new rural wireless networks.

During the 2007 Legislative Session my administration sought to guarantee a favorable tax rate to rural cellular phone systems. In addition, we proposed a 50%, 10 year tax cut for investments by rural wireless providers in new towers to expand wireless coverage. Although the proposal was voted down, this issue will continue to be of vital importance to our rural communities.

As we know, wireless telecommunication is no longer a luxury in our society; it is a fundamental necessity. Law enforcement officers need dependable service to handle dangerous situations such as domestic violence complaints and surveillance work. Drivers and agricultural workers need to be able to rely on wireless service in the event of an accident along the back roads of rural Montana. And in terms of economic development, cell phone coverage is absolutely paramount to bringing new business into the area.

The proposed cap threatens to even further hamper access for rural citizens by cutting off the availability of any new funds for wireless telecommunications investment in rural areas. Together we should encourage the FCC to protect this necessary program. Our timely attention to this matter will go a long way toward helping rural citizens in Montana and beyond.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Schweitzer", written over a horizontal line.

BRIAN SCHWEITZER
Governor